



## News Release

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### **New Report Details Pneumonia Hospitalizations, Care in Utah**

(Salt Lake City, UT) – Pneumonia is a serious, sometimes deadly illness that strikes one of every 100 Utahns annually. From 2003-2005, more than 20,000 Utah adults were hospitalized with pneumonia. When combined with influenza, pneumonia is the seventh leading cause of death in the state. To help inform Utahns of their medical care choices, the *Utah Hospital Comparison Report on Pneumonia Hospitalizations for Adults* was released today by the Utah Department of Health's (UDOH) Health Data Committee.

"Pneumonia is an important cause of serious illness and death, especially for the very young, elderly and those with chronic lung or heart disease," said Robert Rolfs, M.D., state epidemiologist for Utah. "This report provides useful information on the cost and outcomes of pneumonia in Utah hospitals," he added.

The report compares Utah hospitals in pneumonia treatment based on charges, quality of care and patient safety. Readers can make comparisons of hospital performance factors such as in-hospital mortality, average charges, length-of-stay and the number of pneumonia cases each facility treats. Though the report includes the more common types of bacterial and viral pneumonia found in adults, it does not include pneumonia in children or less frequent pneumonia illnesses associated with diseases like tuberculosis and cystic fibrosis.

The report examines 2005 average hospital charges for pneumonia hospitalizations in adults. For example, the lowest average charge for treating pneumonia patients with "minor" or "moderate" illness was \$3,907; the highest average charge was \$14,695. Among patients treated for pneumonia with "major" illness, the lowest average hospital charge was \$2,814, while the highest was \$38,314.

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The report notes that patients with more extreme forms of pneumonia will often require more complex treatment and longer hospital stays than patients at the minor/moderate illness level. On the other hand, patients who are very ill and die before they receive significant treatment or have “do not resuscitate” orders may have lower charges. Average charges shown in the report do not include physicians' professional fees or personal costs borne by the patient.

The report also helps readers compare quality and safety ratings for pneumonia hospitalizations. The report states that 943 patients died from pneumonia while in a Utah hospital during 2003-2005. One hospital had more deaths than expected in comparison to national counterparts. According to Carol Masheter, Ph.D., primary analyst and one of the writers of the report, “Utah as a state had fewer deaths during this period than other states with similar hospitals that treated similar patients. More than half of Utah hospitals that treated pneumonia patients had fewer deaths than expected,” Masheter said. Hospitals that treated fewer than 30 patients for pneumonia during the period did not receive a rating in the report.

Over the past year, the committee has released a total of five hospital comparison reports addressing various medical areas such as heart conditions and surgeries, hip and knee surgeries, maternity and newborns, and pneumonia hospitalizations. All these reports will be updated in 2007, and the committee will release new reports focusing on gallbladder procedures and general surgeries.

“This report is an important tool for all Utahns,” said Terry Haven, consumer representative for the committee. “It provides a wealth of information about pneumonia and can help families decide which hospital is right for them should they need treatment,” he added. “To get the right care you must ask the right questions and these consumer reports, coupled with our *MyHealthCare* Web site, help users make informed decisions about their health.”

The full report can be found at <http://health.utah.gov/myhealthcare>.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*